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AUTHOR Freund, John C.
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ABSTRACT

Professionals in the fields of counseling and counseling psychology do not have a clearly defined role that helps them to form a professional identity. Many of the functions presently performed by professional counselors are within the capacity of trained, mental health paraprofessionals. However, research indicates that professional counselors often react defensively when "professional" functions are assigned to paraprofessionals. The purpose of this study is to explore some of the reported realities of the relationship between professionals and paraprofessionals in the field of counseling. The author suggests four functional principles to facilitate the introduction of paraprofessionals into a counseling setting: (1) functional identification which specifically defines the activities counselors may engage in within the institution; (2) functional differentiation which describes the association of the activities with either professionals or paraprofessionals; (3) team identification which allows the thorough integration of paraprofessionals yet maintains clearcut functional identities for both professionals and paraprofessionals; (4) institutional identification which suggests the establishment of expectations and goals on the part of the institution. The paper discusses the implementation of these four principles. (Author/HMV)

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PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IN INTERACTION

by

John C. Freund

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The employment of paraprofessionals* to supplement and extend the services of professionals* is a fact of life in many fields. Social casework aides, legal technicians, teacher and nurse aides are becoming institutionalized participants in the delivery of their particular services. In some fields the relationship between pros and parapros is reasonably clear cut. This obtains particularly in medicine and law where functional guidelines are very evident for the individuals involved. The role of the doctor or lawyer has many distinctive qualities which comprise an identity. The parapro and pro in these fields have this identity to respond to in establishing a working relationship. Pros in the fields of counseling and counseling psychology do not have a clear cut role that helps them to form a professional identity. Leona Tyler, in a recent issue of the Counseling Psychologist, said, "I have come to the conclusion during recent years that the questions about the counselors distinctive role are inherently unanswerable. Counseling is not a role but a function, an essential function in complex modern societies" (Tyler, 1972, p. 6).

If we accept the functional rather than the role identification of counselors then I suggest this has serious implications for the relationship between pro and parapro counselors. Many of the functions (individual and group counseling, administrative duties, etc.) presently performed by professional counselors are within the capacity of trained mental health parapros (Carkhuff, 1969; Gottesfeld, Rhee, Parker, 1970). On the surface, this appears to be a rather threatening condition for the professional counselor, and does not bode well for the potential relationship between pros and parapros. The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the reported realities of the relationship between pros and parapros in the field of counseling and counseling psychology. Secondly, I will suggest and illustrate some functional principles that may

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*hereafter professionals will be represented by pros and paraprofessionals as parapros.

facilitate the introduction of parapros into the pros life of the individual counselor and his institution.

For the purposes of this paper, parapro refers to individuals other than certified pros engaged in counseling and psychological counseling services. Parapros can make a contribution to service delivery in their own right, not just as adjuncts to pros or to provide new employment possibilities for the poor. The parapro in counseling and psychological counseling helps to expand the range and scope of institutional services. David Hardcastle says that the para-professional "is not functionally beneath the professional; he is simply functionally different" (Hardcastle, 1971, p. 57).

The counseling literature (as represented by the Personnel & Guidance Journal and Counseling Psychology) has not reflected a concern for the relationship of pros and parapros. In fact, the issue seemed rather closed in 1966 when the APGA issued a statement of policy on support personnel for the counselor. Under the section "guiding principles" it says, "There are certain services, such as the establishment of a formal counseling relationship, for which the counselor must maintain responsibility and which only a counselor can provide" (APGA, 1967). The functional relationship was clearly stated; counselors would do counseling and parapro counselors would get no closer to clients than "informal superficial social conversation...to help put them at ease" (Zimpfer et al, 1971, p. 57). Although this statement reflects a reasonably extreme position it is not very far removed from the attitudes of many counselors. Clearly, counselors following the above dictum will forever remain tied to traditional direct service delivery. Zimpfer's et al (1971) called for a closer look at the relationship of pros and parapros as counselors engaged in new functions.

Literature in related fields begins to explore the potential and real difficulties in the relationship between pros and parapros. Reflecting the tone

of the APGA statement, Grosser (1970), a sociologist, says that the greatest amount of friction will occur when parapros are assigned to direct contact responsibilities. He reports that pro groups often react defensively and are unwilling to accept the notion that there are significant "pro" functions that could be assigned to parapros. If we accept the notion that efficient and adequate means of evaluating personnel are not presently available in counseling, then the professional has no way to truly decide what the parapro has to offer. This unknown quantity may be a real threat to the counselor (Lesh, 1967).

Margaret Rioch (1967) realistically states that mental health pros are motivated by concern for themselves, their security and prestige as well as a desire to do good and be humanitarian. The employment of parapros must somehow fit with the interests of the pro and his clients if the "threat" of the parapro is to be removed. Douthit (1971) found that vocational rehabilitation counselors in New York expressed favorable attitudes toward parapros and were willing to find a place for them in the rehabilitation system. She found a significant relationship between counselor self-acceptance and acceptance of parapros.

A study of the relationships between teachers and parapros (Krouner, 1970) suggests that those who were higher in psychological health were more accepting of parapros. Teachers who accepted parapros were significantly more independent, secure, self confident, spontaneous, and able to interact warmly with others. Cammaert (1968) measured attitudes toward the utilization of lay counselors held by counselors and counselors in training. Her results are particularly significant for this paper because of her sample (300 members of APA, Division 17; 300 members of APGA, Division 2; and 200 students in APA approved counseling psychology programs). The APGA sample was less accepting than the APA and student samples. Although counselors in training held less favorable attitudes toward parapros than pros, neither group had favorable attitudes toward employment of parapros.

The attitudes of parapros toward their jobs and toward pros are of equal

importance to a successful relationship between the two groups. E. Baker (1972) met for three days with thirty parapro mental health workers representing nine different training programs and seven different institutions. Investigating job functions and job satisfaction, Baker revealed some interesting insights relative to the relationship between pros and parapros. Baker combined the subjects in his group with the Rioch group of mental health counselors (Magoon et al, 1969) and found that the highest percentage of functions performed were "indirect client services." Second in importance was "professional growth," i.e. training, and "direct client service-helping" was a close third. Particularly important, reports Baker, was that salaries, prestige, as well as cooperation provided by pros were significantly less than ideal. A majority of the respondents expressed a wish to become more closely involved, either formally or informally, with clients experiencing problems.

In response to Baker's Job Satisfaction Scale respondents rated the mean importance of: freedom to make and act upon their own decisions 6.4 on a 7.0 point possible scale; cooperation among mental health workers 6.4/7; cooperation between parapros and pros 6.4/7. All respondents indicated the actual situation was less than ideal. Baker also looked at numerous potential obstacles that interferred with fulfillment of job functions. Number one on the list with three times as many responses was "resistance from staff" (lack of acceptance and/or cooperation). Parapros perceived anxiety and some resentment from pros when they assumed responsibilities and effectively performed functions previously assigned to pros. A final area of concern, common to Baker's group as well as most other parapro groups, is the lack of opportunity for career advancement and recognition for performance in most institutions.

The above review attempts to illustrate some of the crucial variables in the relationship between pros and parapros. There are three levels which must be clearly identified. First, the personal security of the pro may be threatened

by the employment of parapros. Secondly, the already unclear professional identity of counselors and counseling psychologists is further distributed by the introduction of parapros desirous of doing direct service. Finally, the relationship between pros and parapros becomes an institutional issue concerned with salary, responsibility and status. Ideally, the professional and institutional issues would be resolved if a few significant steps were taken by pros and their respective institutions. If pros could agree among themselves, in conjunction with their professional organizations and institutions about role and identity issues, this would help. Secondly, relationships would improve were services more clearly described. Decisions as to who will perform which service should be made by the criteria of competence, availability and congruence between individual predilections and skills, and the nature of the client population. Finally, many clearly institutional issues would be ameliorated were provision made to license or certify parapros at different levels of service (Ketron, 1970).

The personal issue of pros' psychological health and the implications for acceptance and use of parapros cannot be easily resolved by organizational or group action. Unfortunately, pros in counseling and counseling psychology have little support for their personal positions in institutional systems. Institutional administrators rather than counseling pros often initiate the employment of parapros. Unfortunately those parapros appear imposed upon the pro with few if any clear cut plans for their functioning. The ambiguous position of the imposed parapro understandably evokes the feeling in counselors that there is a real and present danger to their existence.

My experience as a consultant to counselors in a senior high school and three junior high schools as well as working with parapros in a community mental health center may help illuminate the reality of this issue. Among the high school counselors the introduction of parapros was viewed as an issue of raw survival. This primary reaction, couched in extensive efforts to resist and

sabotage parapro employment, was curious since pros were given six months to propose their own plan for the use of parapros. Junior high school counselors were more accepting of parapro employment, but, on the whole, these nine counselors were more heavily involved with individual and group counseling (education-personal-social) than were the high school group. There was fear among both groups, however, and I believe some insight, that trained parapros could perform many of the functions they were presently performing. However, in comparing the reactions of the two groups, it was the more actively involved "pro" junior high group that was more accepting and cooperative in the planning for introduction of parapros.

Parapros in the community mental health center performed as individual and group workers (counseling and therapy) and pros (mostly psychiatrists and psychologists) supported their employment. This situation obtained primarily because there was an evident lack of pro staff to fulfill these positions. In the community mental health center parapros were most threatened because pros clearly preferred certified workers and sought to fill "therapist" slots with pros whenever possible. In many real ways, however, the community mental health center, with limited funds for the employment of "pro" staff depended upon parapros for the delivery of direct service. In most cases parapros received extensive assistance and encouragement in the development of their skills and educational standing. In the educational setting, plans for the implementation of parapros involved in the upgrading of pro skills in an effort to differentiate them more clearly from parapros. Comparing the community mental health center experience with the school groups highlights the pro identity issue raised earlier in this paper: psychiatrists and clinical psychologists with fairly clear identities do not perceive the need to further differentiate themselves from a group that does not threaten their functional position.

Educational institutions, employing the majority of counselors and counseling psychologists, have in the past looked to counselors to take the burden of the increasing socialization role of the school and college. In an attempt to counter the urgency and complexity of the institutional socialization task, schools and college administrators add parapros to counseling staffs. Counselors, realizing that the ultimate goal of both the profession and institution is the delivery of services both adequate in quantity and quality, are in a quandary as to the use of these parapros. Although difficulty and conflict may obtain between pros and parapros, service to students and clients remains of paramount importance.

The scheme for determining roles for pros and parapros suggested by Richan (1961) reflects the strong professional and agency controls in social work. Richan developed a model based on the concepts of client vulnerability and worker autonomy. Client vulnerability refers to client's susceptibility to damage for the agency's failure to provide skilled and responsible service. Worker autonomy is characterized by the amount of freedom (reflected by rules, routines, regulations, and privacy of contact) afforded the worker. By combining the vulnerability and autonomy variables worker roles for both pros and parapros can be identified. Richan moves from a condition of high client vulnerability and high worker autonomy, a pro role, to low client vulnerability and low worker autonomy, a parapro aide role. This model is presented for its heuristic value and with the suggestion that it is a direction counselors may want to move.

The problem, however, is that counselors and counseling psychologists are often in institutions without the clear cut organizational structure and professional controls of the social worker agency. This paper therefore suggests the following functional principles to facilitate the introduction of parapros into a counseling setting while meeting the goal of extending quantity and quality of service to students and clients. Implicit in this approach is the temporary

abandonment of the professional role issue. This author believes that a functional relationship between pros and parapros is the key to a successful rapproachment and successful service delivery.

A productive, non-threatening, functional relationship between pros and parapros may be approached by interaction structured around four basic principles. Defined below, these concepts are functional identification, functional differentiation, team identification, and institutional identification. These principles represent an instrumental response to the complexity that is the relationship between pros and parapros. By adherence to the proposed constructs and the suggested activities they imply, the counselor will find a helpful guideline for the implementation of programs that employ parapros.

Functional identification suggests the clean and specific definition of all the activities and potential activities counselors may engage in within the institution. In addition, functional identification requires the spelling out of skills, interests, and availability of personnel needed to perform these identified functions. The emphasis is to be placed upon breaking down tasks and personal characteristics into manageable units so that "functions" may be identified. "Functions," then, are identified by the interaction of tasks and personal characteristics required to fulfill those tasks.

There are also two aspects to the concept of functional differentiation. First, "functions," as defined above, are associated with pros and or parapros within the institution. This process serves to distinguish individuals in a practical and instrumental fashion. New parapros may have to await assignment to functions until their capacities can be identified. In-service training programs may be geared to preparing parapros for specific functions. During the second step, functions are arranged in pro and parapro clusters to provide an instrumental identity for each group. The component functions of these clusters are not meant to be rigidly fixed, yet they should be clear enough to engender

a structured relationship between pros and parapros.

Team identification involves the grouping of functions across cluster boundaries into a working unit that provides a particular kind of service (i.e. group vocational counseling). If the counseling center is small this may require the appropriate grouping of clusters to attend to all services provided. Team identification allows the thorough integration of parapros into the service unit and yet maintains for both pros and parapros clear cut functional identities.

Institutional identification suggests the establishment of expectations and goals on the part of the institution for the counseling organization. Establishing a set of expectations and goals should permit the emergence of a unified ideology of service to which parapros and pros may subscribe. Pros and parapros alike will subsequently be able to functionally relate their specific activities to the emergent institutional ideology. Counseling pros should play a significant role in the development of the institutions ideology. The more explicit the functions and ideology the easier it will be for both pros and parapros to identify themselves and thus form more productive relationships.

How do these concepts interact to support pro/parapro relationships? Let us employ a specific example for demonstration purposes. The counseling center may be charged by the institution with helping students and clients develop a healthy orientation to the world of work. Individuals, the institution believes, should understand the role of work in their lives and counselors are responsible for providing opportunities for growth in valuing, decision making and life planning. This ideology, including the goals and expectations of the institution, provides a framework through which pros and parapros may perform.

Without attempting to outline an entire vocational development service we can view the dynamic interaction of functional identification, functional differentiation, and team identification. One activity that counselors engage in is vocational group counseling. One aspect of this may be the dissemination

of occupational information and review of occupational interests. To accomplish this task the pro or parapro should have an interest in and working knowledge of occupational information. In addition, the counselor should have skill in using information materials in counseling students in groups. Combining the task and personal skills and qualities we have function A in support of the above institutional ideology.

Function B involves the in-depth examination of self in vocation within the group counseling setting. This function requires personnel with highly developed group leadership skills, an appreciation of vocational development as human development, and an interest in students' vocational growth. We may now differentiate function A from function B and assign these functions to individuals available within our hypothesized staff. Based upon knowledge of the general levels of development of pros and parapros, I would probably assign function A to a paraprofessional and function B to a professional. Again, assuming a myriad of functions, clusters of functions for pros and parapros will emerge as a natural consequence of the above process.

Moving across cluster boundaries we group all functions that relate to vocational group counseling. Pros and parapros will be integrated within a team to provide a comprehensive vocational group counseling program. Some aspects of the program will be carried out by pros, some by parapros. The functions will be different yet complimentary, sustaining a unified team effort. Functional identification and functional differentiation are structuring tools designed to help the pros and parapros identify themselves within a subtle and complex work setting. These two elements are dynamic in that they allow for modifications based upon a change in activities and/or personnel. As a pro's or parapro's skills, interests, or availability change so may his or her position change functionally. We wish to avoid the often debilitating and static nature of institutional role identification.

The concept of team identification and institutional identification respectively facilitate the integration of the parapros into the professional counseling unit and into the institution. Team identification fosters the development of pros and parapros as a functional group. Increased knowledge of individual's work habits and skills, as well as personality, should encourage mutual appreciation and respect between pros and parapros. Identification with the institution hopefully allows both pros and parapros to subscribe to a coherent ideology.

Exloring the reported realities of the relationship between pros and parapros has revealed critical personal, professional, and institutional issues. This paper concentrates on addressing the issues over which counselors have some reasonably direct control. The literature reveals that parapros are less concerned with salary and benefits than other more pressing issues, such as, status and responsibility. The four principles proposed in this paper have been specifically prepared to assist counselors in planning for and initiating programs that employ parapros.

Several benefits should flow from a positive, healthy relationship between pros and parapros. Each group should be permitted to make its unique contribution to service delivery. Secondly, as relationships develop and parapro skill and interests are identified, counselors should find it easier to expand the range and scope of services. A personally fightened or professionally rigid attitude towards parapros may result in a diminution of quality services. Finally, the process of structuring the relationship between pros and parapros should provide counselors an excellent opportunity to take a close look at themselves and their activities. The emphasis, as it has been throughout this paper, must be on: what functions are to be performed (clear operational definitions); who can and is willing to perform them; and finally how can functions be integrated to provide service and adhere to institutional ideology.

The proliferation of parapros in counseling programs without adequate concern for personal, professional and ideological issues is not, by itself, a solution to counselors or their institutions present difficulties.

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